



# PROGRAM NEWS

United States Agency for International Development

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**USAID/Nicaragua  
Development Program  
1998-2003  
(U.S. Millions of Dollars)**

<i>Rule of Law and Good Governance</i>	43.6
<i>Small Producers</i>	47.0
<i>Natural Resources</i>	14.0
<i>Healthy Families</i>	35.0
<i>Primary Education</i>	17.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>US\$ 157.1</b>
<i>Food Aid</i>	13.1



## Model Schools Protect the Mombacho Volcano Natural Reserve

**Granada, Nicaragua**—From the San Caralampio public elementary school students have a privileged view of the majestic Mombacho Volcano, yet none of the 113 students had ever had the opportunity to visit the cloud forest located on the summit. Now through a USAID-funded program students and their parents have toured this important natural reserve and are actively involved in preserving it and protecting the area's environment.

The Mombacho Volcano, located southwest of the capital of Managua, near the shores of Lake Nicaragua, is one of Nicaragua's most important cloud forests containing more than 170 species of birds and over 750 kinds of plants, including 87 species of orchids. The 600-hectare reserve is home to howler monkeys and some species like the Mombacho Salamander and



*Maria José Tellez, a third grade student at the San Caralampio school shows a class collection of butterflies found in the Mombacho Volcano Reserve.*

the Mombacho Orchid are found nowhere else on Earth.

With a \$120,000 grant from USAID, the Cocibolca Foundation, a private Nicaraguan conservation group that protects and manages the reserve and visitors' park, has set up a community outreach environmental education program. Working in 10 elementary schools in the Mombacho area, the Cocibolca Foundation trains teachers in environmental education, provides materials and books to these schools and organizes field trips for both students and parents. In coordination with USAID's Basic Education Program, these schools have become model learning centers using innovative teaching methods, student government and parent involvement.



*Students at the Poste Roja School learn about environmental protection and reforestation by planting gardens and tree nurseries.*

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## Model Schools Protect the Mombacho Volcano...

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Teachers receive assistance in the classroom from environmental specialists of the Cocibolca Foundation and have gained first hand knowledge of Mombacho's flora and fauna on three field trips conducted by Cocibolca Foundation staff.



Parents and students built compost latrines in three of the Mombacho area schools participating in a USAID-funded program through the Cocibolca Foundation.

The program has also carried out workshops and field trips for parents on plant identification and using plant extracts for better health. A workshop on soybean based cooking was led by a mother from one of the schools participating in the program.

Several of the schools have planted gardens and established tree nurseries to help reforest the Mombacho area. Students and parents at three of the schools built composting latrines, modeled on the ones they saw during a visit to the Mombacho Volcano Park.

At the San Caralampio School, students have planted trees and learned to make organic compost. Classrooms are decorated with environmental themes and students make school projects from recycled materials. The student council has organized committees that provide peer tutoring, cultural activities, fund raising and environmental projects.

"We take turns coming on weekends to water our trees and plants," said third grader Maria Jose Tellez, a member of the student council.

Teachers at the Poste Rojo School often conduct classes outside under trees. A sixth grader from the school, Eduardo Antonio Castillo, won first place in a nationwide writing contest for his composition on the environment. Students can identify the different species of plants and animals found in the Mombacho reserve.

Teachers and parents agree that academic performance has improved at these schools since the program started and both parents and students appreciate the environment around them and the importance of the Mombacho reserve.

"This has given the children an incentive to work hard and get ahead," said Diego Gonzalez, a father who helped build a compost latrine at his children's school.

Said Erica Marchena, president of the parents council at San Caralampio: "Before, my children used to kill birds with slingshots. Now they wouldn't even think of killing a bird or harming the environment."



Schools receive materials and books through USAID's model schools program that promotes innovative teaching methods.

### USAID/Cocibolca Foundation Project Profile

**Name of Project:**  
*Environmental Education: "When the Forest is the Classroom"*

**Period of Grant:**  
*2000 to 2002*

**Amount of Award:**  
*\$120,000*

**Project Focus:**  
*Community participation through school activities that promote conservation of protected areas and environmental education for teachers, students and local residents*

**Number of Schools Participating:**  
*10 Schools*

**Number of Beneficiaries:**  
*1,145 students  
28 teachers  
470 parents  
10 communities*



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